

Inauguration of the Takaichi Administration and Challenges in Energy Policy

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On October 21, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) President Sanae Takaichi was nominated as Japan's 104th Prime Minister in the National Diet, becoming the first female prime minister in the history of Japan's constitutional government. Following the official appointment ceremony at the Imperial Palace, the Takaichi Cabinet was formally inaugurated. This new administration marks a significant shift in Japanese politics, replacing the quarter-century-long coalition with the Komeito Party with a new coalition between the LDP and Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Innovation Party: JIP), ushering in a new political era.

The path to the Takaichi administration was marked by dramatic and intense developments rarely seen in recent Japanese politics. In the October 2024 House of Representatives election, the LDP failed to secure a single-party majority for the first time since 2009. Even with Komeito, the then ruling coalition fell short of a majority, becoming a minority government. The July 2025 House of Councilors election further complicated the problem, leaving the ruling parties in the minority in both chambers. Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, who continued in office, struggled to manage the administration and finally announced his resignation in September 2025, prompting a leadership election within the LDP.

In the LDP presidential election held on October 4, Takaichi defeated Shinjiro Koizumi in a runoff, winning strong support from party members and becoming the first female president of the LDP. However, further upheaval followed. On October 10, Komeito informed Takaichi of its decision to leave the coalition, citing disagreements over stricter regulations on corporate and organizational donations. The collapse of the long-standing LDP-Komeito coalition destabilized the political landscape, raising the possibility of a change in government. Opposition parties (Constitutional Democratic Party, Democratic Party for the People, and JIP) explored unifying their support for a single prime ministerial candidate. Ultimately, the LDP and JIP moved closer, signing a coalition agreement on October 20. Based on this agreement, Takaichi was nominated as Prime Minister in the Diet on October 21.

Following the inauguration of the Takaichi administration, public opinion polls showed high approval ratings. A Yomiuri Shimbun survey reported a 71% approval rating for the new cabinet, surpassing the 70% recorded by the first Abe administration and ranking fifth among all administrations at their launch. Support was especially strong among younger voters (ages 18–39), reaching 80%, with significant recovery among those aged 40–59 at 75%. Additionally, 57% of respondents viewed the new LDP–JIP coalition positively.

Despite its strong start and high expectations, the Takaichi administration faces numerous challenges. Although the new coalition brings the government closer to a majority than during the last minute of LDP-Komeito era, it remains a minority in both houses. Effective policy implementation will require cooperation with various parties on a case-by-case basis. Immediate priorities include addressing inflation and steering domestic political and economic policies, while foreign and security policy must

navigate a complex and uncertain international environment. In this context, Prime Minister Takaichi is scheduled to hold her first summit with U.S. President Donald Trump during his visit to Japan from October 27–29. The new administration must urgently tackle a wide range of critical domestic and international issues.

Among these challenges, energy policy under the Takaichi administration warrants particular attention. In her inaugural press conference, Prime Minister Takaichi expressed her determination to “never give up in building a strong Japan” and to “strengthen Japan’s economy and protect national interests through diplomacy and security.” These principles are expected to guide her energy policy as well. Specifically, while maintaining the “S+3E” framework (Safety, Energy Security, Economic Efficiency, and Environmental Compatibility), energy security is likely to be prioritized. Ensuring a stable and competitively priced supply of energy for consumers will be the fundamental goal of Japan’s energy policy.

This direction aligns with the Seventh Strategic Energy Plan approved by the Cabinet in February 2025. Accordingly, the Takaichi administration is expected to advance the realization of Japan’s future energy vision as outlined in the plan, focusing on implementation and concrete actions across various energy sectors based on the administration’s own priorities. Japan faces an uncertain and challenging energy geopolitical environment, with a high dependence on energy imports compared to other major countries. A robust energy strategy is essential for building a strong Japan.

From this perspective, there are three key areas of energy policy that the author would like the Takaichi administration to give special focus on. The first is the policy toward maximum utilization of nuclear power. The Seventh Strategic Energy Plan explicitly states the policy of “maximum utilization” of nuclear energy. The administration is expected to take concrete steps under strong national leadership to achieve this goal. Ensuring safety, gaining public understanding, and effectively utilizing existing reactors could allow Japan to pursue energy transition with minimizing energy cost run-up throughout the 2030s. To realize this potential, restarting reactors with local consent and maintaining stable operations are essential. Strong leadership is required to advance efforts that strengthen Japan’s economy and protect national interests.

The second is the promotion of US-Japan energy cooperation. The upcoming summit with President Trump presents an opportunity to build personal trust between the two leaders and to concretely advance mutually beneficial energy cooperation. Securing competitively priced U.S. LNG is a top priority for Japan. As U.S. LNG supply expands dramatically toward 2030, Japan can serve as a gateway to the growing Asian market, benefiting both countries. Cooperation in rare earths, nuclear energy, and AI—areas of strategic importance to the U.S.—should also be pursued. Revitalizing the Japan–U.S. Strategic Energy Partnership (JUSEP), originally agreed upon by former Prime Minister Abe and President Trump during his first term, in line with current and emerging new global conditions, is essential.

The third is the promotion of energy strategy to enhance economic security. As global fragmentation intensifies, economic security has become a critical issue. In the context of energy transition, enhancing security of clean energy supply chains and critical minerals such as rare earths is an urgent priority. Addressing supply concentration requires not only expanding and diversifying supply sources but also demand-side measures such as resource conservation, development of alternative technologies, and recycling. Strengthening emergency response capabilities and establishing international frameworks to deal with supply emergencies are also necessary. A comprehensive strategy is needed to build a strong Japan and protect its national interests for the Takaichi administration.

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